United Nations A/C.3/62/SR.4

General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
12 November 2007

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 9 October 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Wolfe ..... (Jamaica)

Contents

Agenda item 62: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*)

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07-53363 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 62: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/62/71-E/2007/46, A/62/122 and A/62/168)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/62/61-E/2007/7, A/62/61/Add.1-E/2007/7/Add.1, A/62/132, A/62/154, A/62/157 and A/62/357)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/62/131 and Corr.1)

1. **Mr. Antonio** (Angola) reaffirmed his Government's commitment to the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, in particular, the goal of full and productive employment and decent work for all. His delegation noted with concern the rise of youth unemployment, the persistence of discriminatory practices at the workplace, the difficult working conditions in the informal sector, the lack of balance in opportunities created by globalization and the continuing gender inequalities in the global labour system. It welcomed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

2. Angola had been making considerable efforts to increase access to education, combat illiteracy and promote employment, particularly among women, young persons and persons with disabilities, through investment in infrastructure and administrative reform. It had also established technical and vocational training centres in an effort to decrease unemployment and poverty among young persons.

3. Social protection reduced the economic vulnerability of poor people. His Government had made steady progress in providing such protection, including in the area of nutrition, education and basic health care. It had been working with the private sector, particularly the oil and diamond industries, to provide additional social protection systems. Notwithstanding the central role played by the State in fostering social development and poverty alleviation, the private sector should take some responsibility for social protection, which was limited or ineffective in most poor countries. Social investment was the best means of promoting motivation, reliability and productivity among workers as well as combating vulnerability in the labour market.

4. **Mr. Nguyen Tat Than** (Viet Nam) said that economic and social development must be more inclusive and equitable. His delegation noted with concern that unemployment rates in many parts of the world remained high, especially among young persons. Economic growth did not always go hand-in-hand with equitable social development or increased employment. "Jobless growth" posed serious challenges to the attainment of full employment.

5. His Government was implementing measures to fulfil the goals set forth in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development which covered vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children with special needs, persons with disabilities and persons living with HIV/AIDS. Viet Nam's national employment programme was aimed at generating some 1.5 million jobs each year, driving down urban unemployment and increasing vocational training. It had succeeded in raising per capita income and reducing the poverty rate in 2006. Much remained to be done, however, to achieve more inclusive social and economic development. Priority was currently being given to improving the lives of the poor through improved infrastructure, irrigation, land use, access to social services and credits. One of the most pressing issues facing Viet Nam was the surplus labour resulting from the ongoing process of offering shares of former State-owned enterprises to the public. His Government had recently adopted legislation to assist laid-off workers, including unemployment insurance and assistance in finding new work.

6. His Government was working with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to promote sustainable employment and had received assistance in developing labour legislation, reducing poverty through the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, enhancing labour safety and other areas. It called on the international community to work towards the establishment of an equitable economic environment in accordance with the Millennium Declaration and Monterrey Consensus.

7. **Mr. Pancras** (Thailand) said that full and productive employment and decent work for all was crucial for social development. The issue of youth employment deserved particular attention. His delegation noted with concern the disproportionate share of unemployed young persons in the world labour market. If the problem was not addressed, unemployed young persons would be vulnerable to alienation, ideological manipulation, substance abuse and various forms of delinquency. Employment must go hand-in-hand with education and entrepreneurship. His Government attached priority to promoting universal access to quality education.

8. Genuine social development required societies which were strong from within. The institution of the family was at the core of every advanced society and provided for needed social safety nets during crises. The international community should give greater emphasis to traditional family structures, which were being challenged by increased urbanization and migration. His Government had adopted national strategies for long-term strengthening of the institution of the family.

9. The potential of persons with disabilities was an important driving force for social progress. His Government had therefore actively participated in the negotiations on and adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and was currently taking the necessary legislative steps to ratify the Convention. Meanwhile, it was necessary to consolidate disability-related mechanisms within the United Nations system to avoid duplication and ensure the efficient use of resources. Lastly, his Government was working to ensure that the elderly population could continue to contribute to the development of Thai society.

10. **Ms. Kulzhanova** (Kazakhstan) said that social development issues must remain a priority for the principal bodies of the United Nations. Member States must make a firm commitment to the timely and full achievement of agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Unemployment remained one of the most pressing challenges to development and poverty eradication. Her delegation shared the view expressed in the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/62/122) that the lack of social protection in the informal economy hampered social development. There was a need to strengthen national statistical programmes for data collection in that area.

11. Youth unemployment continued to be a major challenge. As young persons were the most likely segments of society to migrate in search of a better future, there was a need for more detailed study of youth migration. His delegation also believed that the family played an important role in social development. Greater attention should be given to family protection, and a family perspective should be incorporated into international efforts to promote the rights of children and young persons, the elderly and women.

12. In the past five years Kazakhstan had succeeded in maintaining a high level of economic growth and raising living standards. Her Government continued to increase social spending, on health care, education, employment and in other areas. It had enacted legislation to address unemployment, provide decent work and increase the standard of living of the population.

13. Her Government was undertaking reform of the pension system and instituting compulsory individual health insurance with a view to improving the lives of older persons. It had also given special attention to the needs of persons with disabilities. In conclusion, she said that social development, the well-being of the population, poverty eradication, education and decent employment were key elements for preserving global collective security and peace.

14. **Mr. Muradov** (Azerbaijan) speaking as the youth representative of Azerbaijan, said that young people represented a major force in global, social and economic development. Governments should therefore find more effective ways of involving them in the development of their countries and treating them as equal partners in the process of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Goals, which were interconnected, could be achieved by 2015 if Governments and civil society showed the political will to do so.

15. The year 2007 had been proclaimed Youth Year in Azerbaijan. Policies and programmes targeting young people remained at the core of the country's social development policy, with the emphasis on youth employment, support for young families and social integration programmes for vulnerable groups, such as young people with disabilities. It was gratifying to be

able to report that, as a leading member of the Youth Employment Network, Azerbaijan would host the Fourth Youth Employment Summit in 2008. A 2002 law on youth policy had recently been amended in order to improve social and economic opportunities for young people. A youth fund was to be established and youth houses set up to provide special services to young people nationwide. Favourable bank credits and loans would be issued to young families. The Government had also adopted a State programme on education abroad, under which some 5,000 young people would be able to study for new professions, such as computer engineering, in developed countries. The programme would be sponsored by the Azerbaijan Oil Fund.

16. Azerbaijan continued to face challenges as a result of the conflict with Armenia. Measures were being taken to help young people who had suffered from displacement, economic and social insecurity and psychological trauma. He paid a tribute to ILO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the TakingITGlobal network, which provided valuable assistance to youth initiatives in Azerbaijan. Lastly, he expressed the hope that more young people would be able to participate in future sessions of the General Assembly and become real partners of Governments in meeting the challenges ahead.

17. **Mr. Vohidov** (Uzbekistan) said that his Government attached great importance to social development. Strong social protection was among the basic principles of the Uzbek model of development. His Government had carried out several programmes for the protection of the family, women, children, the elderly, disabled persons and other groups and allocated a large share of its national budget to social security. It gave particular attention to the most vulnerable segments of society. The traditional local government authorities known as *makhallya* played an important role in fostering social protection.

18. His Government had proclaimed 2007 the Year of Social Protection. Within that framework, a range of measures were being carried out to enhance social protection, prevent wide income disparities and promote a kind and tolerant social environment. His Government had adopted a wide range of social legislation, including on charitable activities, iodine deficiency prevention and workers' compensation. Employment policies had resulted in the creation of more than 1 million jobs, most involving small business. In the light of the large share of the population under 18, his Government was implementing youth employment programmes. New labour and employment legislation was being enacted to take into account such demographic factors. Uzbekistan was making concerted efforts to achieve the goals set forth at the major international conferences on social development and at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and to improve the well-being of the population.

19. **Ms. Gallardo Hernández** (El Salvador) said that her country was resolved to implement the commitments set out at the World Summit for Social Development and the Millennium Summit, in particular the Millennium Development Goals. Progress made in communities and enhanced at the national level was expected to generate employment and income at the local level, improve access to and quality of basic services and promote the participation of civil society through decentralization. Social development was a long-term undertaking which required macroeconomic stability and the establishment of a climate conducive to the human, geographical and territorial integration of the majority of Salvadorians.

20. It was crucial to ensure the well-being and training of El Salvador's human capital and meet its basic needs regarding health, education, employment, housing, social cohesion, family integration and environmental protection. The country's social plan included a series of programmes targeting the most vulnerable members of society, especially in rural areas. Employment was a key to prosperity and social stability. As a post-conflict country, El Salvador focused on promoting youth employment, a prerequisite for poverty reduction, and therefore sought to improve access to education. Skill-building and training programmes were under way. The private sector played a fundamental role in social development. El Salvador had recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, essential social policy instruments that would benefit the elderly. The family was central to Government policy and action.

21. **Mr. Chabar** (Morocco) said that his country, resolved to fulfil the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development and the 2005 World Summit and attain the Millennium Development Goals, had formulated a social development strategy to that end. With the personal involvement of

King Mohammed VI, Morocco had taken measures to reduce poverty and unemployment on the basis of social solidarity. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) optimized such measures in the areas of social action and training. On the initiative of Morocco and Switzerland, the Human Rights Council had recently adopted a resolution on the United Nations declaration on human rights education and training. It was to be hoped that all countries would support the draft declaration, a valuable contribution to the international regulatory human-rights framework.

22. Morocco's literacy strategy concerned 1 million people. It also provided for the enrolment of 60,000 children who were not attending or had dropped out of school, especially in rural areas, and for assisting needy schoolchildren. The objective was to reduce illiteracy to less than 20 per cent by 2010. A special programme was aimed at helping needy female pupils to continue their studies. The Mohammed V Foundation financed training programmes for disabled people and the construction, renovation and outfitting of related centres. In order to ensure women's full participation in social development, Morocco had reformed its family law, a significant contribution to the country's evolution to a modern society based on a culture of human rights.

23. A national initiative for human development (INDH) had been launched in Morocco in 2005 to reduce poverty and social exclusion in rural and urban areas through diversified measures promoting income-generating activities, capacity-building and assistance to people living in particularly precarious conditions. The initiative, which had a 2006-2010 budget of over $1 billion and targeted hundreds of particularly underprivileged rural communities and urban neighbourhoods, comprised a dynamic network of associations and local government bodies and addressed needs identified by the beneficiaries. The network enjoyed international recognition. The African Conference for Human Development had been held in Rabat in April 2007 to promote human development as a prerequisite for the continent's sustainable development. Migration issues, which had an impact on social development, could best be treated at the economic level through co-development and the generation of employment. Transparency and good governance were keys to the success of social policy.

24. **Mr. Emadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, despite the commitments made at Copenhagen and reaffirmed in subsequent United Nations conferences, young people without privilege and wealth still struggled to get a foothold in the labour market, while older persons enjoyed less and less security after a lifetime's work. In some countries, 80 per cent of persons with disabilities were jobless, while indigenous peoples and migrants continued to face discrimination in the labour market. Accordingly, full employment and decent work for all and the improvement of the lives of older persons, young people, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities should be the major collective objectives.

25. The main areas of concern regarding unemployment — jobless growth, global informalization of the labour market and economic and social liberalization — constituted socio-economic trends which led to increased insecurity for workers. Socially responsive and inclusive migration policies should be implemented. Employment creation for youth should be seen in the broader context of poverty reduction and social integration. The participation of young people at all levels was crucial to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and other international targets.

26. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran had made significant efforts towards accomplishing the goals set by the World Summit for Social Development and United Nations plans and programmes pertaining to social development at the national level. Relevant activities had included measures for improving health, reducing poverty and providing job opportunities; a comprehensive social security system; and steps focused on ensuring a fair income distribution and improving the quality of life of vulnerable population segments. To that end, Iran had launched the privatization of State-owned enterprises, including the public sale of 80 per cent of the equity of the major State companies and the distribution of such stock to poor and low-income people free of charge.

27. **Ms. Eilon-Shahar** (Israel) said that, in view of the role of productive employment in reducing poverty and promoting social development and social integration, nations possessing appropriate expertise had a responsibility to participate in combating poverty. Israel looked forward to the policy segment on "promoting full employment and decent work for all" at the next session of the Commission for Social Development. The main responsibility of Governments was to promote social and economic equity and reduce

dependency on the welfare system. To that end, enhanced national action and international cooperation were essential. Nearly all the activities of MASHAV, the Israeli Centre for International Cooperation, were aimed at social or sustainable development.

28. Referring to the emphasis that the Secretary-General's report (A/62/168) placed on the need for policies focused on socio-economic security, she said that Israel had stimulated economic activity and significantly reduced unemployment by allocating resources to infrastructure development and by direct intervention in the labour market, including job creation, reduction of labour costs and provision of wage subsidies. Moreover, Israel promoted capacity-building at the local level through cooperative partnerships.

29. Although as a whole women's participation in the workforce had improved, results had been mixed in the case of migrants. A notable increase in women migrants in low-wage jobs had led to higher degrees of exploitation, violence and trafficking. As a country absorbing migrant workers, Israel made a particular effort to facilitate social integration, and specific legislation existed in Israel to protect the rights of migrant workers. Despite greater opportunities for youth to participate in global development, particularly in countries with easier access to the media and communication technologies, challenges existed with regard to the number of young adults leaving their family and community framework as a result of learning disabilities, difficulties in adapting to the communal structure, social conditions, lack of emotional support and the regional security situation. Remedial measures taken by Israel in that regard included vocational learning and placement in workplace settings.

30. Persons over the age of 65 accounted for approximately 15 per cent of Israel's population, and their number increased at twice the population's overall rate of growth. In the framework of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, Israel cooperated with the elderly in such areas as legislative policy, planning and provision of services. Community-based services were developed through partnerships and joint activities with the elderly population sector. In Israel, services had become more equitably accessible and adapted to the various population groups, regions and cultures, including the Arab population and immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union. In the light of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the relevant domestic legislation was under review, disability-related study and training centres were being created and a monitoring mechanism was being developed.

31. **Mr. Sergiwa** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that despite the commitment of the international community to implement the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development, unemployment, intense poverty and other social problems covered in the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/168) continued to afflict the developing countries. His delegation called on the developed countries to meet the obligations undertaken at the Copenhagen Summit and in the Millennium Declaration. They should create favourable economic conditions for development, remove obstacles to the right to development and adopt measures that would ensure a net flow of financial resources to the developing countries, since economic and social rights were closely interlinked.

32. Unemployment among youth could not be ignored. His country had launched a programme in 2006 to advance African youth, children and women through the provision of food and medicines and the establishment of health, educational and training institutions that would make an effective contribution to the welfare and education of those groups. In 2007, his country had established a fund for assistance and development in Africa, providing food, clothes, blankets and medical supplies to States affected by drought and flood.

33. His country had also hosted the International Youth Forum held in Benghazi on 21 and 22 August 2007. The Declaration adopted by the Forum had included proposals aimed at encouraging young people to engage in political life and participate in decision-making and establishing mechanisms that would support young people, create work opportunities for them and facilitate their access to loans for small and medium enterprises.

34. His country, which had played a pioneering role in the declaration of 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons, welcomed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the sixty-first session. It also supported the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing,

which ensured that the elderly were included in the development programmes of their countries.

35. **Mr. Tun U Thaung** (Myanmar) noted that, more than a decade after the 1995 World Summit, the world unemployment rate had increased. Economic growth alone could not enhance employment. National and global policies focused on job creation and poverty reduction were urgently needed. Unemployment was most acute in the developing world. Although about 84 per cent of the global labour force was found in the developing countries, employment opportunities there were considerably fewer than in the developed economies.

36. In the context of social development, poverty reduction strategies should take into consideration the young, aged, disabled, marginalized and vulnerable members of society. Youth in particular not only accounted for approximately 20 per cent of the world population, but also represented the future of nations. Contrary to earlier hopes, globalization had failed to benefit developing countries through direct foreign investment, and liberalization had not generated new opportunities through trade and investment. Advances in technology to improve living standards throughout the world had failed to materialize. Globalization sometimes entailed uncertainty for workers who relied on jobs generated by foreign direct investment. Job insecurity was compounded by unilateral sanctions and coercive measures with a negative impact on the economy of the countries concerned and their most vulnerable population groups.

37. The Government of Myanmar strove to attain the Millennium Development Goals, including eradication of poverty and hunger, through a national plan utilizing the country's own resources, and had developed a number of programmes designed to narrow the socio-economic development gap between rural and urban areas. Those programmes had significantly contributed to poverty alleviation and enhanced employment opportunities, particularly in rural and remote regions.

38. **Mr. Kinyanjui** (Kenya) said that the issues of poverty eradication, full and decent employment and social integration could not be credibly addressed without adequate resources, fair international trade, access to markets and technology and an environment that encouraged partnerships. In its bid to attain the Millennium Development Goals, Kenya attached great importance to gender equality, youth development and social inclusion. A number of legal, structural and institutional frameworks and mechanisms had been established, in conjunction with civil society and the private sector, in order to ensure that all Kenyans were involved in the development process.

39. Despite pledges and commitments made at major conferences and summits, the level of effective development cooperation and financial assistance was low. The achievement of full and productive employment and job creation in many countries had been seriously hampered by a lack of resources. It was therefore imperative to mobilize such resources, including new and additional funds, to enhance the efforts of developing economies, such as Kenya, in confronting adversity. Access to economic tools, transfer of technology and the full participation of all sectors of society, including in the political process, was essential.

40. Although the Kenyan economy had registered an unprecedented growth rate of 6.1 per cent and output had risen, unemployment, informal and self-employment and short-term contractual employment were on the rise. Investment in education, health care, social protection and skills training were important keys towards building a society in which all people could contribute effectively to the common good. In that regard, the Government's policies regarding free primary and secondary education, maternal and child health care and the provision of free antiretroviral drugs were expected to improve the living standards and educational level of Kenyans.

41. The Government had also initiated a pilot project on social protection with plans to adopt a comprehensive policy on ageing. Similarly, a National Plan of Action for Youth Policy, addressing eight priority areas, including employment, education, environment, empowerment and participation, had been launched. Although youth constituted about two thirds of the economically active population, they also accounted for 61 per cent of the unemployed. Unemployment in Kenya was not simply a lack of jobs, but also a lack of appropriate infrastructure and the means by which to acquire skills. One billion Kenyan shillings had been earmarked during the financial year 2006-2007 for the Youth Development Fund (YDF), which had been introduced by the Government, in collaboration with civil society and the private sector, to increase the access of young entrepreneurs to loans.

The Fund was regarded as a radical intervention, and its management structures and guidelines were being developed in consultation with youth, financial intermediaries and other partners.

42. Kenya believed practical solutions must be identified in order to raise people out of abject poverty and disease and to give them a life of dignity and self-worth. Such steps included providing predictable resources, implementing initiatives that were tailored to needs and involving the beneficiaries themselves at each phase in the process.

43. **Ms. Moss** (Panama) said that the Government of Panama had formulated a number of social policies to enhance capacity-building and to guide development policies towards greater social well-being. She detailed the work of the Ministry of Social Development in overseeing the technical and operational coordination of the *Red de Oportunidades* (Opportunity Network), aimed at strengthening human resource capacity, and at providing health and education services.

44. Panama had introduced anti-discrimination labour legislation, and had promoted measures to regularize the civil status of persons who might have been previously disenfranchised, thereby granting them greater access to benefits. She described a number of steps taken to promote social policies in favour of youth and literacy and to protect vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities. Panama had been the second country to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, and as a sponsor of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, remained committed to the right of indigenous people to development and to improving their economic and social status, free from all forms of discrimination.

45. Public information campaigns had been launched to sensitize the general population on the subject of delinquency, violence and street crime, which had become a major concern of Panama. The constitutional principles regarding the punishment of minors established jurisdiction for the protection of minors and offered them a special regime of custody, protection and education.

46. The objectives and achievements at the domestic level had demonstrated the efforts of the Panamanian Government to fulfil its obligations undertaken at the World Summit on Social Development in 1995. Both the Government and civil society were committed to achieving a more efficient, democratic and participatory society and better quality of life for all Panamanians.

47. **Mr. Sen** (India) said that although the role of productive employment in achieving the goals of the World Summit for Social Development had been widely acknowledged, the current global situation showed that many regions had been plagued by setbacks and were far from achieving the Millennium Development Goals. A number of developing countries faced the challenge of counteracting jobless growth and reconciling market forces with the objective of a decent work agenda. Direct anti-poverty programmes were necessary as a measure of social protection. Workers in the informal sector should also be brought within the ambit of social protection systems. Continued dependence on agriculture and high demographic growth made the challenge of full employment and decent work even more difficult to achieve.

48. At its highest level, the Government had acknowledged the need for a more inclusive growth process that raised the incomes of the poorer sectors of the populations and generated expansion in decent employment, while ensuring access to essential services such as health and education. Employment growth in India had risen to 2.6 per cent between 1999 and 2005, outpacing population growth. The generation of employment had been one of the most important objectives of India's economic development plans, and particular attention had been paid to encouraging activities with high employment potential, such as construction, transport and information technology. Priority had also been placed on micro and small enterprises, which currently employed 29.5 million persons and contributed to approximately 35 per cent of the country's manufacturing output and 34 per cent of exports.

49. In addition to various programmes, a number of employment generation poverty eradication programmes were being implemented. Another notable initiative was the National Rural Employment Guarantee programme, which established the right to work as a fundamental right: the equivalent of 100 days' wages was assured to every rural household, thereby creating a social safety net, and the programme provided improved infrastructure and access to health services in rural areas.

50. India had recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as an important step towards executing the constitutional mandate to develop an inclusive society. In the same vein, he expressed his delegation's support for the Madrid International Plan of Action and mentioned the establishment of the National Council for Older Persons, which exercised an advisory and coordinating role in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes for older persons.

51. **Ms. Sow** (Senegal) said that in formulating its national development strategy, the Government of Senegal had paid particular attention to the improvement of people's living conditions through various social and economic strategies that were based on community development and assistance. In spite of economic growth, social indicators pointed to tension in social relations, due in particular to urban spread, social adjustment programmes and devaluation, all of which accentuated upheavals in family and social structures.

52. In that regard the recommendations of the World Summit for Social Development, the programme for the First United Nations Decade for the Elimination of Poverty, the Millennium Development Goals and the New Partnership for Africa's Development had served as a frame of reference for Senegal's efforts to combat poverty, and had largely contributed to some improvement. Nevertheless, poverty eradication remained a key concern. The Government had decided to establish a strong economic and social policy aimed at improving the situation of the most vulnerable groups and strengthening social cohesiveness and integration within the framework of development. Responsibility for that policy lay with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, which had instituted programmes for action to be undertaken by State bodies, development partners and other social actors. As part of its poverty-reduction effort, the Government had launched a series of long-term programmes to strengthen national mechanisms for equity and social justice; to coordinate and evaluate action aimed at the most vulnerable sectors of society, specifically women, children and persons living with AIDS; and to consider issues pertaining to exclusion.

53. Senegal attached great importance to the family, and in that regard, a number of measures had been adopted to ensure the stability of family structures. Efforts had been targeted at addressing sociocultural values, care for the elderly by families, pension funds, the establishment of centres for the treatment of mental illnesses and social integration and rehabilitation centres for persons with physical disabilities.

54. Older persons were covered under a substantial health plan, and all persons with physical or mental disabilities received appropriate attention and sustained assistance. The Government was deeply committed to the total eradication of poverty, but the Millennium Development Goals were still in the distance. In closing, she took the opportunity to launch a solemn appeal to all African countries and their international partners to continue their joint efforts aimed at lifting Africa out of its current predicament.

55. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, all States had made the commitment to promoting the goal of full employment, had agreed upon the vital necessity of eliminating poverty through decisive national measures and international cooperation and had recognized that stability, security, justice and the protection of human rights were prerequisites for social integration.

56. On that basis, his country had established national goals and specified a time frame in which to accomplish them. The tenth five-year plan for development (2006-2010), which formed the pivot of his country's human development policy, emphasized production and sustainable economic development combined with the just distribution and continual increase of income and linked macroeconomic policies to the creation of employment opportunities, which would lead to a number of institutional and legal reforms. Emphasis would be placed on enhancing performance in the human development sectors, improving social services, developing the infrastructure and implementing programmes for balanced regional development, poverty alleviation and the generation of employment opportunities.

57. His Government's social policy focused on empowering young people and adolescents. That focus was an important tool with which to draw the map of the future, in view of the unprecedented risks that young people faced in a world of rapid change. His Government sought to adapt education and training so that young people were equipped to face the challenges of the era; enable the family to contribute fully to

supporting young people; expand the choices and employment opportunities available to young men and women while eradicating all forms of exploitation; and enable young people at all levels in society to participate in public life, decision-making and the design of plans and programmes in areas affecting them.

58. A national plan of action for the health and social protection of the elderly existed and an inter-ministerial national social welfare committee for the elderly had been established, led by the Minister of Health. A family protection unit had also been established. His country had recently signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Policies for the protection of the elderly, the family and the disabled secured them financial, health and social support, raised awareness and provided for the necessary research in order to ensure that they led a decent life. A social protection network plan had also been established, linked to the development of social protection programmes and the provision of direct material assistance to families in need.

59. His country attributed particular importance to the creation of an enabling environment for social development. However, the complicated process of achieving social development depended on the international as well as national factors. The provision of an enabling environment in the region was impeded by, inter alia, foreign occupation, instability, policies of siege and isolation and disregard for the rights of peoples to development and decent work. Social integration and development were incompatible with the foreign occupation of 40 years, which had caused the subjection of his fellow citizens in the occupied Golan and their expulsion from their homes and deprived them of employment opportunities, education and health protection.

60. His delegation would have hoped that the report of the Secretary-General on goals and targets for monitoring the progress of youth in the global economy had taken into account all the obstacles confronting young people under occupation and that the 2007 Report on the World Social Situation had benefited from the International Labour Organization reports on the negative impact on employment of foreign occupation.

61. **Ms. Makhumula** (Malawi) said that the nexus between economic growth, employment and poverty reduction was increasingly gaining recognition. In Malawi, the agricultural and informal sectors accounted for a significant share of total economic activity; and, since many young people worked in those sectors, they were closely involved in policy development and programme implementation. They were also given access to microcredit.

62. The Government had adopted the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, which aimed at poverty reduction through sustainable economic growth. In addition to formal education programmes, Malawi was promoting the establishment of community skills, development centres, known as village polytechnics, for the benefit of poor rural households, particularly those headed by a female, people with the smallest landholdings and school dropouts. Programmes had also been put in place to promote integrated development through Rural Growth Centres. The Social Action Fund, public works programmes and fertilizer subsidy programmes had been introduced to empower the rural population and encourage decentralized decision-making.

63. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Malawi had recently signed and would shortly ratify, gave the international community a chance to improve the plight of persons with disabilities. It also provided the opportunity to consolidate disability-related activities within the United Nations and improve the synergies of the Convention, the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Reporting procedures by Member States should also be streamlined.

64. Malawi had in place a number of programmes aimed at the integration of persons with disabilities into mainstream society. The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy made special provision for the most vulnerable, and the issues of disability and ageing had been incorporated into national education policies. Persons with disabilities were helped to approach institutions providing soft loans for small enterprises.

65. In recognition of the skill and experience that older people brought to the workplace, to public life and to the family, a national policy for elderly persons had been drafted, with the goal of increasing older people's capacity for productivity, independence and active involvement in the development of their

communities and the country as a whole. A growing number of older persons had assumed the role of caring for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The Government recognized their importance in that regard.

66. **Ms. Shaidi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her country's National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty was focused on three main areas: reduction of income poverty, improved quality of life and good governance and accountability. In view of its pivotal role in national prosperity, employment was a key aspect of the National Strategy. The Government had also ratified the core ILO conventions and reviewed labour laws in order to guarantee fundamental labour rights and establish basic standards. Bodies had been established to set the minimum wage in each sector. Despite such measures, unemployment and poverty levels continued to rise. The Government had therefore adopted measures to promote microfinance, savings and credit societies and to provide vocational training for entrepreneurship and business skills. It was also reviewing the legal framework for formalizing the informal sector, which would give the sector access to productive resources.

67. A third of the population, representing 68 per cent of the productive force, was aged between 15 and 35. To enable them to contribute to the country's development, a national youth policy was in place, reflecting the World Programme of Action for Youth, the African Youth Charter and the Millennium Development Goals. The Government welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendations in his report on goals and targets for monitoring the progress of youth in the global economy (A/62/61/Add.1). Tanzania was already implementing some of the recommendations, but the collection of youth-specific disaggregated data would be difficult, owing to capacity constraints. Meanwhile, the Government had developed a comprehensive national youth employment action plan, which also incorporated an HIV/AIDS programme.

68. The cooperative movement provided excellent opportunities to eradicate poverty. Through various forms of job cooperative, women, young people, the elderly and people with disabilities had gained access to financial services enabling them to finance a small enterprise, build a house or educate their children. Capacity-building was required, however, to enable the cooperative movement to have a greater impact.

69. The Government had policies on young people, the elderly, families and peoples with disabilities. In that connection, it welcomed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It had already started the ratification process and was reviewing regulations on the employment of people with disabilities.

70. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that the Government continued its efforts to rehabilitate, reconstruct and develop the economic, commercial and infrastructure of the country by mobilizing its limited human, material and financial resources. The Government acted on the principle of equity and equality in its delivery of social services to all parts of the country. The policy on youth was mainstreamed into the national development strategy. Young people were mobilized into a national programme to participate in development projects, such as infrastructure construction, crop production or fishing. Expanded educational and training centres provided opportunities for young people to acquire the skills needed to join the workforce. In view of the transitional nature of the political situation and the fact that young people were entrusted with the duty of defending the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, active participation in developmental activities had been required. That had enabled the development process not only to continue at a faster pace but also to be broad-based, while ensuring social cohesion. For that reason, his delegation believed that, although international cooperation had an important role to play, national Governments should have the freedom to decide on home-grown strategies that reflected specific conditions and priorities.

71. The Government had instituted a system to support the most disadvantaged members of society, such as the families of martyrs, families affected by HIV/AIDS, older persons, disabled persons and children. The Government's disability policy was principally focused on the Community-based Rehabilitation Programme, which catered for persons with disabilities. Starting out as a pilot project, the Programme was being extended to 32 regions, covering about 60 per cent of the country. A State-run orthopaedic workshop had provided over 20,000 people with prostheses and other appliances. The policy also aimed to provide access to health and rehabilitation services, education, vocational training and other assistance to facilitate mobility and

communication. Great strides had been made in achieving some of the Millennium Development Goals; yet many structural problems remained unchanged. Unless action to combat poverty was intensified and coordinated at every level, many countries, including Eritrea, would not succeed in halving poverty by the target year of 2015. The global development agenda must be implemented in full.

72. **Mr. Ndjonkou** (International Labour Organization) said that, when, in 2006, the Economic and Social Council had adopted a Ministerial Declaration recognizing full and productive employment and decent work for all as a global goal, Member States had requested the whole multilateral system to mainstream the goal in their policies, programmes and activities. To that end, the High Level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination had asked ILO to take the lead in developing the Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work. The Toolkit was important not only in fostering greater policy coherence but also in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, because "decent work" meant work in which rights were protected, adequate income generated and social protection granted. The role of cooperatives was crucial in that connection, not only in providing employment but in facilitating the economic and social progress of its members. ILO recommendation No. 193 (2002) set out the principles by which ILO was guided in that regard.

73. ILO believed that the goal of productive and decent work for youth was best attained through its Youth Employment Programme, which was based on three pillars: (i) information on the magnitude and characteristics of the youth employment challenge, together with policies to deal with it; (ii) promotional activities and advocacy to raise awareness and mobilize support; and (iii) technical assistance to help Governments and employers' and workers' organizations develop coherent and coordinated policies. One specific area of ILO support focused on the development and implementation in many countries of national action plans on youth employment.

74. An ILO report, entitled "Equality at work: Tackling the challenges", examined emerging issues in patterns of workplace discrimination and inequalities. One such issue was that of age. In many countries, longer life expectancy had not been accompanied by longer working lives. The debate on the impact of ageing on social security financing, therefore, obscured the fact that a large number of women and men were unemployed, inactive or working in the informal economy, instead of being employed formally and contributing to pension systems. ILO was developing innovative strategies to meet such challenges and help extend working lives in productive and decent employment. The ninety-eighth session of the International Labour Conference would include a general discussion on an effective plan of action to achieve that end.

75. With regard to the question of families, ILO research and experience underscored the importance of addressing the work-family conflict in both developing and developed countries. Such a conflict was particularly acute in poor families, which found it difficult to work their way out of poverty and end the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Women, too, saw their economic security and hopes of equality continue to be threatened by their reproductive role, since they faced discrimination and dismissal on the basis of actual or even potential pregnancy. Where they did not have decent work or maternity protection, their health and that of their children was liable to suffer. ILO was working to address such realities and the lack of awareness in most developing countries. Country studies had been produced on the difficulties workers faced in providing for their economic needs and carrying out their responsibilities. A recent ILO paper on safe maternity highlighted priority areas for action in the world of work and would contribute to progress on Millennium Development Goal No. 5.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.